

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5317

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 0426

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UK, MT

SUBJ: UK-MALTESE RELATIONS

REF: VALLETTA 0123 AND LONDON 00854

1. GOM HAS BEEN FOLLOWING RECENT UK POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS WITH HIGH INTEREST, AND BOTH RESULTS OF ELECTION AND DESIGNATION WILSON AS PRIME MINISTER WILL BRING LITTLE SATISFACTION HERE.
2. IN GENERAL SENSE, MINTOFF IS KNOWN TO DISLIKE WILSON, AND CROWN ADVOCATE GENERAL MIZZI TODAY TOLD US THAT MALTESE HAVE NO AFFECTION FOR HEALEY BASED ON HIS ROLE IN MILITARY RUN-DOWNS ON MALTA WHEN HE WAS DEFENSE MINISTER. MIZZI THINKS CALLAGHAN MAY BE MALTA'S BEST FRIEND IN HMG. MIZZI CLAIMED THAT IN SPITE OF THEIR DIFFICULTIES, MINTOFF HAD CONSIDERABLE RESPECT FOR HEATH.
3. ANOTHER ASPECT THAT WILL BOTHER MINTOFF IS POSITION OF BRITISH LABOR PARTY ON ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES.
4. AT THE SAME TIME, WILSON'S ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE MAY FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS SERVE TO KEEP LID ON UK-MALTESE DIFFERENCES, MOST
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IMPORTANT OF WHICH IS DEVALUATION QUESTION. MIZZI, WHO HAD BEEN

MUCH INVOLVED IN THIS PROBLEM, POINTS OUT TO US THAT MINTOFF HAD TAKEN FAIRLY UNDERSTANDING POSITION OF HEATH'S PROBLEMS AND HAD NOT RECENTLY BEEN PRESSING HIM. HE SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT THAT MINTOFF WOULD BE DISPOSED TO OPEN THIS QUESTION AGAIN WITH WILSON. MIZZI DESCRIBED SITUATION AS "INACTIVE" AT PRESENT.

5. UK HIGH COMMISSIONER ON MARCH 4 GAVE US AN INTERESTING SLANT ON THE PROBLEM. A FEW WEEKS AGO, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY WISTIN ABELA TELEPHONED HIGH COMMISSIONER TO ASK IF BRITISH COULD PROVIDE UNDER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TWO INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT EXPERTS, "IN ANTICIPATION OF MINTOFF'S AGREEMENT TO HEATH PROPOSALS" (REFTELS). AFTER CHECKING WITH LONDON, MORETON REPLIED TO ABELA THAT WHILE UK WILLING TO TRY TO IDENTIFY SUCH EXPERTS, THEY WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO PROVIDE THEM TO MALTA UNTIL THERE WAS SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF PROPOSALS OFFERED BY HEATH. HE ASKED ABELA IF HIS STATEMENT QUOTED ABOVE WERE SIGNIFICANT, TO WHICH ABELA REPLIED THAT THINGS WERE MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION.

6. COMMENT: FROM THESE INDICATIONS, IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT UK-MALTA DISAGREEMENT WILL FLOWER AGAIN IN NEAR FUTURE.GETZ

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